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Laptops: The Essential Buying Guide

The ABC's

Bay A cavity in a notebook used primarily for removable drives, but also for accessories. A two-bay notebook has an internal bay for the hard drive and a second bay for a CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, floppy disk drive, or a spare battery. A three-bay notebook also has a floppy disk drive built in. Some manufacturers use the term *spindles*, referring to the shafts on which the disks spin, so a two-spindle notebook has two drives and two drive bays. Most optical bays are 12.7mm (0.5 inches) thick; smaller notebooks are shifting to 9.5mm.

Bluetooth Technology for wirelessly transferring data short distances (up to 30 feet) among notebooks, cell phones, Palm or Pocket PC handhelds, and printers. It is available on many notebooks. Bluetooth is not a competitor to wireless Ethernet. A Bluetooth-enabled PC Card can be added to a notebook for about \$50.

DVD-CD-RW drive The most popular optical drive for notebooks, it reads DVDs and CDs and writes CDs. Dropping back to a read-only DVD or CD drive saves, at most, \$50 to \$75. Adding writeable DVD is costly, as much as \$250 extra; users who upgrade should consider multifunction DVD writers that write both minus (DVD-RW) and plus (DVD+RW) discs. Virtually all PC and consumer DVD players read all write-once DVDs.

Docking station A cradle for your notebook that provides space for extra drives and attachment ports for all your cables. Docking stations are popular in business, but are losing favor to port replicators among individuals. Replicators typically don't have any expansion bays.

FireWire A high-speed connector (capable of 400 Mbps). Universal on Macs, common on media-oriented PCs for transfers from digital video (DV) cameras. USB is used for virtually all other high-speed data transfers on PC notebooks.

Kensington slot A universal connector for a physical security lock, named after the company that invented the feature. Regardless of the brand, virtually every notebook security lock you can buy fits the Kensington-style slot.

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1. Hewlett Packard Compaq Business Notebook Nc6000
2. Toshiba Toshiba Qosmio E15-AV101 PQE10U-00H00M
3. IBM THINKPAD X40SMB CENTRINO-1.2G 40GB XPP 256MB X4BASE+DVD/CDRW 3YR
4. Compaq Compaq Presario R3000z Customize Notebook
5. Acer TravelMate 3201XCi more >



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